

## HCS HB 586 -- PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

SPONSOR: Rhoads

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill prohibits a peer support specialist who obtains information from a law enforcement officer or emergency services personnel while acting in his or her capacity as a peer support counselor to disclose any confidential information unless certain factors, as specified in the bill, are met. There is no prohibition on communication between peer support specialists or any communication between the specialists and the supervisors or staff of an employee assistance program. There is also no prohibition on communication regarding fitness of an employee for duty between an employee assistance program and an employer.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this would give members of the law enforcement and emergency personnel community an outlet to discuss the stresses of their jobs without worrying about confidentiality. Most states in the Midwest already have such laws in place, and Missouri is one of the only ones that do not. It makes sense for individuals who work in law enforcement and emergency services to be supported by their peers since they are also judged by their peers. The purpose of the peer support specialist is not to solve an individual's problems; rather, he or she is there to listen and support. When these individuals serving our communities are mentally well, they are better able to perform their duties and protect the public. Suicide is a big issue in these communities, and this bill is meant to help prevent such tragedies.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Rhoads; Brad Lemen, Missouri Fraternal Order Of Police, Kansas City Lodge 99; Missouri State Troopers Association; Missouri Police Chiefs Association; Gary A. Christmann; Missouri State Council of Firefighters; Kansas City Missouri Police Department; Missouri Coalition For Behavioral Healthcare; Sally M. Frese; Department of Public Safety; and Missouri State Highway Patrol.